Re-imagineering Belgrade and Skopje: urban megaprojects between politics and struggle

Nebojša Čamprag

Abstract

This comparative study on the urban re-imagineering performed through large-scale urban refurbishment focuses on the specific post-socialist and post-conflict contexts of former Yugoslavia. Through the analysis of legislative and planning documents, expert interviews, reports, and media coverage, this study shows how initiatives for the implementation of grandiloquent urban megaprojects (UMP) in the capital cities of Serbia and Macedonia became extreme examples of national image reconstruction, carried out through autocratic state-led interventions that disregarded public input. The two main insights that the study provides classify these cases as rather particular in the European framework. First, the national governments have played a decisive role in conceiving entrepreneurial strategies for national rebranding through urban re-imagineering of its capital cities. Second, this politically orchestrated processes advanced through non-transparent decision-making, in spite of the rising opposition by the civic alliances. In conclusion, autocratic implementation of UMPs in the urban contexts of the Yugoslavian successor states played out much more forcefully, overriding the imperative to satisfy genuine public interest.

Keywords: urban megaprojects; urban politics; urban imagineering; national image; civic initiatives

Introduction

Nearly three decades after the collapse of the socialist system, most of the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have shown different rates of transition to market-oriented democratic societies (Stanilov, 2007; Turk, 2014). The transition process, coupled with profound political and economic reforms, has also influenced the means and dynamics of spatial transformations. Within the already highly diverse region, the successor states of the former Socialist Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia (SFRY) could be considered as a particular case. For decades, they have been under the influence of socialist planning and modernist functionalism that fundamentally transcended national boundaries and local specificities. In addition to the complex post-conflict recovery processes driven by neoliberal agenda, the challenge to (re)define national identities and improve their international representation in the post-socialist period became one of the most distinct common characteristics amongst these highly centralised nation-states. In achieving this objective a convenient strategy was selected, based on the production of attractive imageries through large-scale interventions on the urban refurbishment of their capital cities.

Identified as the most outstanding examples among the successor states, this paper focuses on the two capital cities from the region. Both the Republic of Serbia and its capital Belgrade suffered from a negative media-generated image after the Balkan conflicts, in addition to the legacy of technocratic planning principles. After the separation from SFRY, Republic of Macedonia became characterized by an atmosphere of unresolved internal conflicts, while its capital Skopje lacked in desirable built assets for symbolical representation of the independent nation. For the political elites in both countries distorted (inter)national profiles served as a major stronghold to take on the major role in reinforcing national image through large-scale urban refurbishment. Political leaders in Serbia advocated for an iconic intervention on the waterfront in Belgrade as a tool to improve the city's image and thus the country's reputation for further investments. Meanwhile, the Macedonian political elite looked upon Western European cities, in their fantasizing a perfect 'historic' capital to create a new cornerstone for shaping the image of the newly born European nation. Through the analysis of legislative and planning documents, reports, and media coverage on the implementation of the UMPs in question,[1] this qualitative case study demonstrates the national image-building ventures

---

[1] For the purpose of this research, a non-systematic approach to data collection and data analysis was used. The material has been collected from the following major sources: a) legislative and planning documents and reports; b) media coverage; and c) semi-structured interviews with NGO representatives. However, the first source was used only in the case of Belgrade, where several documents have been made publicly available–some of them only for a limited period of time. In the case of Skopje it was impossible to implement a similar approach, considering a complete lack of

in Serbia and Macedonia sharing some striking similarities in their top-down approaches. Furthermore, semi-structured expert interviews with representatives of the civic initiatives in both cities emphasized non-transparent decision-making in these processes, followed by the rising civic engagement and significant public dissent against the state-led revamp of the national capitals, as another similarity between the two case studies.

Considering the complex terminology used in this paper, it remains necessary roughly to define their use in the frames of this research. The concept of urban images or urban imageries refers to the "conceptions in our minds about that complex physical reality we call cities" (Domosh, 1992). Being far less complex in comparison to the multi-layered term of urban identity (Hilber & Datko, 2012), urban images are easier to comprehend and thus widely used for branding and marketing of cities, but are also highly subjected to manipulations. Urban imagineering, as the process of the creation of urban images, usually remains under the influence of central governments, city governments and city districts, and is often negotiated between these levels. Furthermore, the multi-layered notion of national identity is based on the shifting and contradictory elements and is thus defined as a quality shared by the citizens of a nation-state; "a kind(s) of collective cultural identity" (Smith 2002: 15). The far less complex notion of national image refers to "the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people" (Kunczik, 1997: 47). In the conceptual framework of this paper, urban image of the national capitals plays an important role in the construction of national image, being of particular relevance in the context of Yugoslavian successor nation-states.

Besides from this introduction, the paper is organized in additional five sections. In the following one, the role of urban megaprojects (UMP) in urban and national image

---

transparency and information on the project from the government level. Furthermore, regarding media-articles, an online database search of several national and international medias was performed. Targeted were the media-articles that analytically and critically addressed and followed up the processes of contracting and project implementation, as well as public protests. The interviews with representatives from the NGO sector (as listed under the references) have been conducted using a semi-structured method, performed in Serbian language, and translated to English by the author. Finally, all the collected data has been analysed in a non-systematic way, and thus used to provide relevant information and support for the main arguments in the text.

making is discussed, and this debate is linked to the scholarly work in the CEE context. The third section reviews the political context of identity in socialist Yugoslavia and discusses its implications for the spatial development of the cities in focus. The fourth section contains an analysis of the initiatives in the former federal capital Belgrade along with the ones in Skopje, and the fifth reflects on the major insights gained through the case studies. The paper concludes with an assessment of both of the case studies in international contexts.

Urban megaprojects as a tool for image making in the CEE context

Many international studies already showed that UMPs have produced globally circulated images, which re-shaped the ways cities and countries represent themselves (Evans, 2003, Broudehoux, 2010). However, many scholars have also criticized UMPs, mostly on democratic, economic and social grounds (Olds, 2004, Orueta & Fainstein, 2008, De Cerro, 2013), and have particularly highlighted the lack of transparency in their development. These "emblematic examples of neoliberal forms of governance" (Swyngedouw et al. 2002: 543) were also described as "self-contained, isolated, and disconnected from the general dynamics of the city" (ibid: 573). Such enterprises were often prone to planning failures, including overspending and excessive delays (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003, Flyvbjerg, 2011). The implementation of the last generation of UMPs even seems to be less clear, with their benefits and gains under debate (Plaza, 2000, Sandercock & Dovey, 2002). While seemingly serving a broad range of interests, they masked the underlying shift "from collective benefits to a more individualized form of public benefit" (Lehrer & Laidley, 2008: 786). Recent civic engagement against particular projects in the Western European context has gained much attention and has contributed to significant delays in their implementation (Novy & Peters, 2013).

How far urban megaprojects in the context of CEE follow the same trends and facilitate comparable processes of socio-economic restructuring is under debate (Müller, 2011, Kinossian, 2012, Kinossian & Morgan, 2014, Koch, 2014, Cope, 2015, Koch &

Valiyev, 2015). In spite of comprehensive changes, urban development of the region is still profoundly shaped by the legacies of socialist urban planning and the post-1990 political and economic reforms. One of the important themes in the literature has thus been to examine the intersection between socialist legacies and global processes of neoliberalization in reconfiguring urban spaces (Stenning et al., 2010, Grubbauer & Kusiak, 2012, Hirt, 2012, Kovács et al., 2013, Golubchikov et al., 2014). In many cases, the outcomes confirmed the assumption that cities throughout CEE have embraced entrepreneurial strategies of urban imagineering and actively supported the transformation of central urban spaces modelled on Western examples (e.g. Temelová, 2007, Cook, 2010, Golubchikov, 2010). Scholars additionally stated that nation-state politics showed a greater influence in the CEE context compared to Western examples, particularly in regard to the implementation of large-scale urban development projects. Despite often being associated with mega events, UMPs were thus in many countries of the region interpreted in terms of post-socialist nation building (Palonen, 2013, Cope, 2015, Kinossian, 2012, Koch & Valiyev, 2015).

Contrary to many countries in the CEE region, the socialist self-management system in SFRY was a rather particular case, considering that it had placed greater importance on market-type economic relations, enabling higher living standard and a lower level of under-urbanisation (Vujović & Petrović 2007). Nevertheless, the supreme role of socialist-state aimed at creating new forms of society in a multinational country by controlling the ways cities has been planned, developed and represented. Considering the strong legacy of socialist planning, difficult and uneven dynamics of transition, complex post-conflict recovery process, and somewhat contested national identities, successor countries of the SFRY thus remained rather particular case even decades after the fall of state socialism. The two case studies of UMPs discussed in this paper, Belgrade Waterfront project in Belgrade and Skopje 2014 in the Macedonian capital, illustrate extreme cases of refurbishment of capital cities led by national governments in

order not only to make an impact on urban image, but also to use its resonance on improving the national image and international reputation. The following section provides an overview of the general circumstances in the former SFRY, with particular emphasis on the contexts of transitioning Serbia and Macedonia.

The political context of identity in socialist Yugoslavia and its implications on the post-socialist transformation of Belgrade and Skopje

After the Yugoslav communists came to power in 1945, they introduced a new socialist federal establishment as a guarantor of national equality in a multinational country (fig. 1). The main principle of Yugoslavia's post-war policy of ethnic relations, "Brotherhood and Unity," had the objective not only of promoting harmonious inter-ethnic relations but also of legitimizing the leading role of the Communist Party in Yugoslav society. The identity of the new nation was thus based on an ideological vision of the common future, rather than on common ethnic, political and cultural characteristics of the constituent nations (Haug, 2012, Jović, 2004). An international modernist style that lacked references to any particular nationality was conveniently selected as the embodiment of the new ideology. The federal capital, Belgrade, was supposed to support national unity and represent all Yugoslav cultural and political identities (Ápor, 2015, Damljanović Conley, 2010). The notable exception was the active support of national consciousness in politically unstable Macedonia (Haug, 2012, Frusetta, 2004) through standardisation of the language, restoration of autocephaly for the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and selective interpretations of its history, aiming to weaken links with Bulgarian nationalist ideology and strengthening its ties to other Yugoslav nations (Haug, 2012, Frusetta, 2004).

Figure 1. Belgrade and Skopje in the former SFRY. Yugoslavia was a multinational country, composed of six federal states, with Belgrade as the federal capital city.

Although after the fall of communism, the Yugoslav capital city confronted similar problems as the capital cities of other CEE countries, there were also some circumstances that made Belgrade a particular case. The city suffered from the consequences of previous development directions, especially with the sheer number of partially realised large-scale urban infrastructure projects that Serbia could not support any longer by itself (Blagojević, 2005). A poor economic situation and international isolation of the country imposed by the UN during the war years prevented external forces from supporting necessary economic liberalisation. The national political elite deliberately delayed socio-economic reforms to keep their power (Vujović & Petrović, 2007), with an overall lack of political interest in the role of Belgrade in global economic

restructuring. Additional consequences of the decade of stagnation also included an extremely negative public image. The much-needed transformation and recovery commenced after Milošević's regime was overthrown in the year 2000, when a democratic shift in the ruling party finally enabled economic liberalisation, initiatives for international competition, and revamp of the national image.
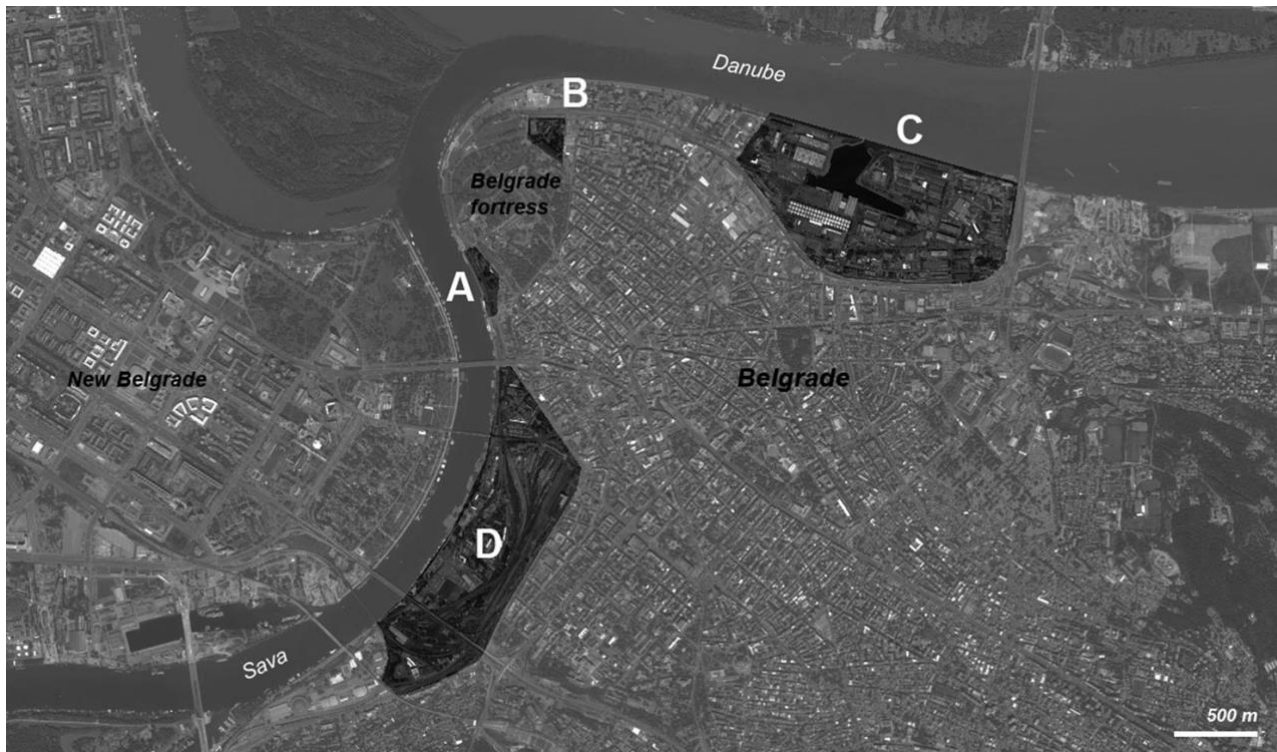

Figure 2. Planned large-scale interventions on Belgrade waterfronts. Legend: (A) The Cloud, (B) Former Beko factory, (C) City on Water, (D) Belgrade Waterfront. Source: http://www.bing.com/mapspreview accessed on 3 June 2017 with authors' additions. © 2017 DigitalGlobe ©, 2017 HERE, © 2017 Microsoft.

Improvement of Belgrade's image rested upon redevelopment of several brownfield areas along the waterfront and close to the city's historic urban core. The initial strategic approach involved introduction of new urban landmarks that could contribute to international visibility of the city through their iconic designs by world's most famous architects, such as Studio Libeskind, Gehl Architects (fig. 2: C), Sou Fujimoto Architects (fig. 2: A), or Zaha Hadid Architects (fig. 2: B). Following another major political shift in 2012, all the mentioned iconic projects were subsequently suspended, due to conflicts over land ownership claims or high implementation costs. In fact, the new national government led by the liberal-conservative Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) strongly advocated for its own and the vision of its strategic partners, on a remarkable location

between the Old City and New Belgrade. Being one of the most strategic development areas the city had to offer (Vukmirović & Milaković 2009), the brownfield site at the bottom of the so-called Sava Amphitheatre was to be converted into a UMP named the Belgrade Waterfront (fig. 2: D).

A particular feature of the post-socialist development of the Macedonian capital, Skopje, was an attempt to hide the Yugoslav socialist ideology and planning, which left a particular legacy due to the comprehensive renovation efforts after the earthquake in 1963. Although famous Japanese architect Kenzo Tange won UNESCO's international competition for designing the new master plan, it was never fully implemented. The universal international style was no longer seen as capable enough to support the identity dispute that came along with the economic and political crisis after independence in 1991 when different ethnic and religious communities started to compete for visibility in the urban realm. Due to a general lack of convenient pre-socialist national histories, a controversial theory also appeared, claiming that the modern Macedonian nation had descended from migrating Slavs, who mixed with remnants of the ancient Macedonian people of Alexander the Great (Frusetta, 2004). On the 20-year anniversary of Macedonia's referendum on independence, a 14.5-meter-high statue of Alexander the Great was unveiled on the biggest Macedonia Square (fig. 3: A; fig. 5-left), officially named Warrior on a Horse (Tanjug, 2011). These portrayals of the national history caused some dissent and discontent within the region. The Greek government accused the Republic of Macedonia of appropriating symbols and figures that are considered being exclusively Greek in historical context (Frusetta, 2004). The contentious monument became the most iconic representation of the Skopje 2014 project, although other initiatives added to the project's overall controversial nature. As the most visible legacy of the former Yugoslav planning, the existing buildings in the style of late modernism were subsequently concealed by new façades with stylistic elements from the times of Baroque, Classical and other historical periods (fig. 3; fig. 5-right).
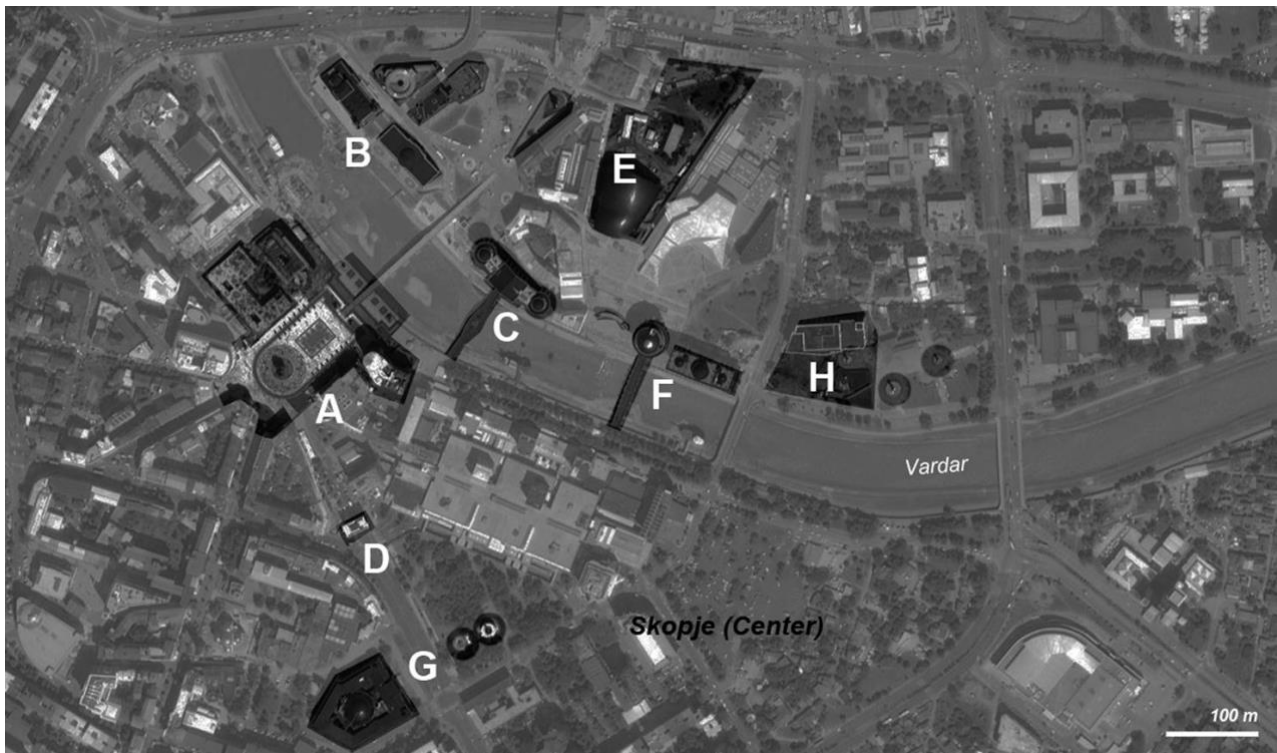
Figure 3. Skopje 2014 project. Legend: (A) Warrior on a Horse, (B) the National Theatre and the Museum of Macedonian Struggle, (C) the Constitutional Court, Archaeology Museum, and the Eye Bridge, (D) Porta Macedonia, (E) the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra Hall, (F) Financial police, Ministry of foreign affairs and the Art Bridge, (G) the Parliament Building, (H) Public administrative building. Source: http://www.bing.com/mapspreview accessed on 3 June 2017 with authors' additions. © 2017 DigitalGlobe ©, 2017 HERE, © 2017 Microsoft.

Belgrade Waterfront and Skopje 2014: from secret dealing to urban struggle

The following section brings analyses of the two case studies, in which politically orchestrated re-imaginering of the national capitals and the nations themselves through non-transparent, top-down led implementations of UMPs resulted with civic contestation and struggle.

Belgrade Waterfront project

Implementation of the initiative for the Belgrade Waterfront became a certainty in 2013 after the agreement on cooperation between the governments of Serbia and the United Arab Emirates was signed (Serbian Government, 2013). This UMP was highly publicized prior to the national parliamentary elections in March 2014 (Bakarec, 2015), after its world premiere at one of the most prestigious international real estate events in Cannes. The project envisioned the construction of high-rise buildings, offices, hotels, and luxury apartments (fig. 4), which after its completion in only six to eight years, would

provide with the new image for Belgrade as a global city. This initiative for urban re-imagineering of the national capital was expected to "significantly improve both the image and the role of Serbia in the region and world" (Tanjug, 2014). At the same time, the project was also introduced as a flagship for reviving the national economy (Filipović & El Baltaji, 2014).

Figure 4. Belgrade Waterfront master plan. Although rather late, in 2014 it was officially announced that the internationally renowned firm SOM designed the flagship Belgrade Tower. Authorship of the master plan, however, still remains unclear. Source: Belgrade Waterfront, © Eagle Hills.

The apparent personal connections and interests of key stakeholders from both parties initiated a public controversy; namely, the then-First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić claiming friendship with the Abu Dhabi royal family, the Al Nahyans (Filipović & El Baltaji, 2014). Soon after the elections in 2014, Vučić became the Prime Minister, and later in 2017 the president of Serbia, both of which further facilitated advancement of the project. Right up until the foundation stone for Belgrade Waterfront was finally laid in 2015, the Serbian national government intervened repeatedly to ensure the project's smooth execution. Vučić himself in many occasions promoted and advocated for the project in the media (Shepard, 2016; Filipović & El Baltaji; 2014, Tanjug, 2014). Besides, the real prerequisites for its implementation were profuse

legislative updates and extensive preparatory work with unforeseeable completion dates, so the very top of the political establishment adopted an extremely autocratic role, characterized by investor-friendly decision-making and exclusion of both municipal authorities and effective legal regulations.

Belgrade Waterfront was officially declared of special importance for national economic development in 2014,[2] followed by the legal but questionable confirmation of the proposed project falling under the public interest (Republic of Serbia, 2015b). The Joint Venture Agreement signed in 2015 (Serbian Government, 2015) set the rules for a newly formed public-private partnership between the contractors, for which several questionable modifications to the existing national and local legislative framework have been enacted (Grubbauer & Čamprag, 2018; Lalović et al., 2015). When the document was finally made available after public pressure, many unclear elements and contradictory information were reported, especially concerning costs and financing of the joint venture. Initially announced that the investor and developer Eagle-Hills was going to invest €3 billion in the Belgrade Waterfront, the amount was reduced to only €150 million (Šekularac, 2014).

In addition to autocratic regulation and overall lack of transparency, legal but questionable citizen participation in decision-making processes was also associated with the implementation of this UMP. Considering that the master plan for Belgrade Waterfront has been developed with a general disregard for public involvement and the unclear authorship of the master plan, the project was apparently

already finished before even made public; public insight and citizen involvement organized later were just *pro forma* and did not change a thing (interview 1, 2017).

The public input into the draft of the Spatial Plan (Republic of Serbia, 2015a) and Strategic Assessment Report (Strategic Environmental Assessment, 2014), followed by a

---

2   The project was declared of special importance for economic development of Republic of Serbia in accordance with the decision 05 no. 350-3533/2014 dated 1st May 2014.

session of the commission for public review (Report on Public Insight, 2014) triggered

public debate. The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts remarked that

> the local experts and the general public were not included in the decision-making process on the elements of the concept (Report on Public Insight, 2014: Comment 15.2.3.)

and advised the government

> to correct the concept, which is too introverted and ignores harmonization with the real context and processes of transformation of the city as a whole (Report on Public Insight, 2014: Comment 15.6.2.).

> The local and national Architect's Associations pointed out that the proposed plan

could have

> serious consequences for the development of Belgrade as a whole, regarding the principles of sustainability, identity, accessibility, competitiveness, and contextuality (Report on Public Insight, 2014: Comment 12.1.).

> Besides from significant engagement of the national intellectual elite and

professional associations, probably the most important contribution to revealing the

legally flawed procedures behind the project's implementation came from the grassroots

level. The civic initiative Ne da(vi)mo Beograd[3] suggested that the proposed plan should

be

> annulled in its entirety and sent back to a new, legal, planned procedure, as the proposed draft is contrary to the law, and is being enacted against the public interest (Report on Public Insight, 2014: Comment 24).

> Since the Joint Venture Agreement was signed in 2015, the initiative Ne da(vi)mo

Beograd has been raising important questions through the engagement of media,

experts, planners, and other NGOs, aiming to mobilize the apathetic Serbian public. This

has finally changed a year later when a group of masked people with bulldozers overnight

demolished private objects in Savamala. Considering that the district belonged to the

area where the Belgrade Waterfront project was to be built, in addition to the lack of

reaction of the police, state officials, and media, the incident was seen as the collapse of

the rule of law (Ignjatijević, 2016). Many citizens joined a series of protests named "The

---

3   A game of words, meaning 'we won't let Belgrade d(r)own'.

masks have fallen", demanding resignations of the responsible national and city authorities, and the mayor. As the representative of the Ne da(vi)mo Beograd stated,

> Since procedural matters did not bring us much, we started organizing various protests, performances and the like. The idea was that the number of people on the streets would finally show disagreement with the proposed development. Another field of our activity was the initiation of criminal charges and a lawsuit against the state to show that what was done is not in accordance with the laws (interview 1, 2017).

Skopje 2014 project

Contrary to the investor-friendly decision making at the highest government level and formalized citizen's input that characterized the implementation of the UMP in Belgrade, the massive urban refurbishment in Skopje was fully conceived, sponsored and later implemented by the national government, with absolute exclusion of citizen participation from decision-making processes (Kubiena, 2012; Graan, 2013). Specific socio-political conditions that enabled the start of extensive work on the recreation of national image were met after a right-wing party with a national democratic orientation, VMRO-DPMNE,[4] won the parliamentary elections in 2008. The state-owned media broadcasted a short video titled Skopje 2014, revealing the government-sponsored renovation plan that envisioned the construction of a new philharmonic hall, three government buildings, a new business centre, a new church, three new museums, two new hotels, a triumphal arch, two new bridges, and over twenty bronze and marble statues of national historical figures in only four years (Graan, 2013). According to Križnik and Janev (2008), a radical shift towards a 'grand national capital' was a basis for the new nationalist discourse of the ruling political party. However, the master plan for the project has been introduced with no information on its authorship, without any other relevant sources, and without any consultation with the general public (interview 2, 2017). Although the political elite standing behind this UMP remained silent on the rationale of the project (Kubiena, 2012), several wiretapped conversations that members of the

---

4 The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

opposition party presented to the media in 2015 revealed that the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski personally instructed "about various aspects of the project" and proposed "some baroque facades, mentioning examples in Vienna, Prague and Paris" (Jakov Marušić, 2015). After the public was presented with pieces of evidence that the very top of the state administration was "the ideologist, planner, designer and creator of 'Skopje 2014'" (ibid.), Gruevski became labelled as "the hidden architect of the state-funded revamp of the capital" (ibid.).

Figure 5. Controversial initiatives in Skopje. Due to its high similarity with Alexander the Great, the monument Warrior on a Horse (l) caused a dispute with neighbouring Greece for appropriating its historical symbols and figures. The new Constitutional Court and the Macedonian Archaeological Museum on the riverbank (r) hid the view of the modernist National Theatre building. Photo: A. de Keijser, 2013.

Resulting from an eclectic assemblage of historicised architectural forms, Skopje 2014 visually and associatively communicated through an abstracted and modified form of imitation, although without concrete historical examples (fig. 5). Through the major semantic shift in architectural language that hardly had any architectural or stylistic references to the history of the capital city or to the Macedonian nation, the aim was apparently at suppressing the country's Yugoslav past and hiding the presence of many religious and ethnic minorities, as well as their cultural and political manifestations (Cvitković & Kline, 2017; interview 2, 2017). Besides, the press pointed out to the following issues;

while some argue that the more 'metropolitan' atmosphere of the city will renew a missing sense of national pride, others say that the project is just an attempt to distract from the country's more pressing problems of high unemployment, poverty, and slow progress towards NATO and EU membership. (Jones, 2015)

The civic sector representative similarly described actions of the government as a

visual propaganda that gives the illusion that something is happening. (...) Another aspect is the illusion of engagement and progress of the economy, which was instead, unfortunately, used for profuse money laundering (interview 2, 2017).

After the much-needed substantial changes in the society and national economy haven't followed as expected, the Skopje 2014 project came under public scrutiny, primarily on the basis of its high costs. From the initially announced €80 million, the real costs rose to €500 million (Kubiena, 2012), with the total expected to reach €667 million by 2018 (BIRN Macedonia, 2016). The relatively muted initial response of the general public grew as the project has progressed, especially after the national intellectual elite and professional associations initiated a number of important open debates. They targeted not only architectural formulation and its questionable aesthetics but also the lack of transparency and inclusion, as well as legally flawed procedures behind the project's implementation. Equally important was the question of the subordinate position that the urban government adopted towards decisions coming from the highest levels of the national political elite (interview 2, 2017). The Association of Architects of Macedonia pointed out that

there is no interest in dialogue, and the institutions officially exist only in order to execute orders. They are not competent enough, but they are sufficiently obedient and ready to be indifferent in order to implement one's ideas (Al Jazeera, 2014).

On the grassroots level, the initiation of student activism against the project through the First Archi-Brigade group (PAB) mainly involved students of architecture concerned about comprehensive physical transformations of the city, while the Freedom Square organisation consisted of intellectuals and other committed citizens who advocated for an approach to Skopje 2014 as a political question (interview 2, 2017).

Conceived as a peaceful demonstration to express resentment against the planned changes of the city's appearance, the First Architectural Uprising led by the civic organisations in 2009 turned violent (interview 2, 2017), which revealed a somewhat divided public opinion. Nevertheless, growing dissatisfaction with the numerous affairs and secret dealing of the VMRO-DPMNE government caused massive protests all over the country later in 2016, in which citizens demanded more democracy and transparency (Srna, 2016). The demonstrations were termed the Colourful Revolution, as during the protests, the new facades and monuments, as symbols of unlawful actions by the government, had colours thrown on them;

> with the colouring of state institutions and monuments, demonstrators showed dissatisfaction with the government and revolt towards the Skopje 2014 project, on which the government has unnecessarily spent plenty of money (Srna, 2016).

The Colourful Revolution, however, did not ease repression of the civic sector, which ultimately emphasised less invasive forms of activism (interview 2, 2017). As the representative of the Freedom Square stated,

> we started to work with citizens on the importance of public spaces, but later we switched to the public interest (…). Our main aim became sensitization of citizens that spatial planning is a political issue (…). We aimed at establishing the relationship between the citizens and the environment, which finally enabled the functioning of the trio involving civil society, citizens and local authorities (interview 2, 2017).

National image making and urban development politics in Serbia and Macedonia

Hidden behind the rationale of improving the national image, both UMPs in question showed some indications of speculative development. Under the auspices of the ruling political establishment in Serbia, Belgrade Waterfront received enormous support in terms of concessions in legislation. Especially important were regulatory adjustments that legally confirmed the public interest status, as a prerequisite for forthcoming procedural actions towards its implementation (Republic of Serbia, 2015b). The project has been pushed for with complete indifference to public opinion or professional advice

(Report on Public Insight, 2014; interview 1). As a result, initial aspirations for a new urban landmark, which should, at the same time, serve as a flagship for national economic revival, were overshadowed by the clienteles' relations and the overall lack of transparency (Grubbauer & Čamprag, 2018). Contrary to the case in Belgrade, where the national significance of the project was a legally confirmed investment-driven decision, Skopje 2014 was strategically based on a romanticised awakening of the national sentiments of the majority. Expressive historic interpretations of non-existent memories and imagined realities, materialised in the very core of the capital Skopje, allowed high visibility and thus enabled an effective re-branding endeavour (Yeoh, 2005). The architectural spectacle was supposed to allow Macedonian political leaders not only to materialise their political authority on the national level, but also to gain economic value on the international stage. The newly constructed layer of nationhood, however, merely covered over the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the new Macedonian state.

Although the initiatives of the intellectual elites gathered around professional associations and grassroots movements in Serbia and Macedonia failed to change the manner in which UMPs were implemented, they are far from being ineffective. The activities of the civic sector in Serbia offered hitherto unknown contestation of the alarming inadequacy of privileging real-estate-led development in the process of post-socialist re-imagineering of the capital, despite repression by the authorities and denigration by tabloid media (interview 1, 2017). The civic initiative Ne da(vi)mo Beograd, in particular, took over the role of advocates for generally more participatory planning, with the inclusion of both the general and professional public, aiming for empowering citizens to deal more with their built environment in a long-term perspective (interview 1, 2017). The initiatives of the civic sector in Macedonia likewise resulted in some significant achievements. They took over the educational role on the loss of the city's authenticity, caused by the use of elements of imagined history in contemporary architectural articulations, which diminished the real common memory. The civic sector also

questioned the use of architectural replacements and false facades to construct cityscapes based on European models, as a means of compensation for ongoing national identity issues. Finally, the civic sector in Macedonia pointed out the lack of democratic public discussion and exclusion of minorities from the programme of the project (Kubiena, 2012, Graan, 2013), as well as the overall distraction of public attention from the burning issues in Macedonian society (interview 2, 2017).

The final results of the ways the UMPs in Belgrade and Skopje have been contracted, designed and implemented seemed to have caused only the opposite effects from the anticipated improvement of international image. The British *Guardian* expressed a great deal of scepticism of the Belgrade Waterfront project while describing the city as "an unlikely place for Gulf petrodollars to settle" (Wright, 2015). The American magazine *Forbes* even named the project "Abu Dhabi's Bad Joke" (Shepard, 2016). Rather than producing a European image for Macedonia, some critics claimed that a second-rate copy of originals could only embarrass and marginalize the country (Graan, 2013), while *Guardian* proclaimed Skopje for "Europe's new capital of kitsch" (Gillet, 2015). The two UMPs thus finally failed to achieve objectives that were supposed to justify their expensive implementation.

From a broader perspective, the governance model adopted in Serbia and Macedonia provide us with several valuable insights related to politics, modes of regulatory capitalism and image making. First, although many authors have already stressed out the particular importance of UMPs for nation-state politics and post-socialist image making in CEE (Palonen, 2013; Kinossian & Morgan, 2014; Cope, 2015; Koch & Valiyev, 2015), the particularity of the cases of speculative urban refurbishments in Belgrade and Skopje were in their national governments and national political elites as key figures to facilitate channelling of these urban interventions. This largely contrasts the currently often-assumed active role of local governments in conceiving UMPs as part of entrepreneurial strategies to enhance their cities' image and locational advantages

(Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Sklair, 2006). Besides, these cases also favour the argument that non-transparent regulatory regimes are more easily adjusted and manipulated to the benefit of political and business elites in CEE (see Golubchikov et al. 2014) than those found in Western European contexts.

The second insight relates to national politics that was often translated into image politics built on spectacular architecture, serving to legitimate the political ruling class and to instil national pride. The globally circulating model would usually involve the aesthetic spectacle, often relying on the big names, with new urban landmarks ultimately serving to streamline public debates and approval processes as well (Charney, 2007; McNeill, 2007; Andersen & Røe, 2016). Contrary to the same type of iconic designs that performed as flagships for urban transformation modelled on Western examples–such as the example of Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao–both Belgrade Waterfront and Skopje 2014 differed. International star-architecture has not been playing a key strategic role in the projects' justifications, and their master plans became known only through press releases circulated through the state-owned media, without authorship or any other information. This ran in accordance with the adopted strategy of stealth and informal lobbying, in which the public was not given any voice, which resulted in gradually rising civic engagement. Thus the following insight relates to the formation of new civic alliances concerned with urban development politics and construction of national identities that was evident in many countries of CEE in recent years (Palonen, 2013; Trumbull, 2014; Jacobsson, 2015). The particular lack of a tradition of civic engagement with urban issues in post-socialist and post-conflict contexts of Serbia and Macedonia has, however, allowed the projects to proceed with an extreme case of disregarding public input. Whether formalized or fully ignored, the voice of the people and local experts in Belgrade and Skopje has thus not been taken into account. This largely contrasts recent cases of mobilization against UMPs in Western Europe, in which grassroots activism even

managed to impose significant shifts in redistribution of political power at local and regional levels, such as in the case of UMP Stuttgart 21 (Novy & Peters, 2013).

The final insight goes hand-in-hand with the general criticism of the UMPs relating to overspendings and excessive delays of the projects in question (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003, Flyvbjerg, 2011). Secret dealings and an autocratic model of governance conveniently eliminated a large part of the risk for the national governments, while at the same time serving to provide hidden public subsidies in both of the case studies. Although not uncommon among the other European countries, such reliance on extremely fragile public budgets could be considered especially troublesome in the CEE context. Nevertheless, as in the case of Skopje 2014, the Hungarian national government similarly reached for public funds to articulate what is to be Hungarian in the public realm of Budapest (Palonen, 2013). However, this showed to be even more troublesome in the extreme case of investor-friendly approach in Belgrade, where the national government took on a variety of responsibilities in case of any unforeseen delays, despite the high risk associated with the project's implementation (Serbian Government, 2015: 26).

Conclusions

This study revealed how implementation of the UMPs in Belgrade and Skopje was led by a one-sided approach to urban and national image-making, along with new dynamics in the global circulation of urban development models, relying solely on goals and preferences of political leaders and/or investors, and with a blatant disregard of public opinion and professional advice. Two general conclusions emerge from this analysis.

First, the national governments in Belgrade and Skopje played the decisive role in the implementation of the respective UMPs. This is in contrast to Western European contexts, where local governments usually played the decisive role in the redevelopment of inner-city brownfields and derelict infrastructures (Moulaert et al., 2004). The active

role of local governments in the conceiving of entrepreneurial strategies that is often assumed today assumes direct negotiations with developers and investors, which usually allowed the harmful consequences of speculative development to be countered. In such cases, the new public spaces and urban imaginaries provided by UMPs indeed contributed to an improvement of the quality of life for residents (Degen & García, 2012; Smith & Von Krogh Strand, 2011). However, the most obvious problem associated with Belgrade Waterfront and Skopje 2014 was in them being expensive projects that crowded out more urgent investments, targeting a segment of representative public buildings, monuments, and business and residential real estate. Utterly misplaced in the capital cities of Europe's most economically and socially deprived countries, these structures fail not only in terms of contextualisation, but also in providing allegedly new points of reference for the post-Yugoslav urban and national re-imagineering.

Second, contrary to the recent civic protests against particular projects in Western Europe that gained much attention and significantly influenced public discourse and policy, similar protests in Belgrade and Skopje have not significantly changed the course of advancements of the respective UMPs. Non-transparent decision-making and extremely autocratic governance in both countries resulted in the blatant disregard for public input and ultimately prevented its influence on the course of these politically orchestrated attempts at nation branding. Nevertheless, some striking similarities with the Western European contexts involve the presumed educative role of the national intellectual elites, enabling swift mobilisation of citizens to confront obscure implementation of the initiatives coming from the very top of the national political establishment.

Considering the major justifications for the UMPs in terms of strengthening national greatness (Müller, 2011), global competitiveness (Golubchikov, 2010), or European cultural roots (Dixon, 2013), this paper finally demonstrates their melting pot in post-Yugoslavian urban context, with its particularities of extreme state-led regulation,

autocratic intervention, and lack of democratic control. The overall failure of the UMPs in Belgrade and Skopje to respond to both urban and national contexts, as well as to address the variety of its socio-economic challenges, was primarily due to an overall lack of transparency in contracting, financing and all other planning and implementation procedures. Such prioritisation of project delivery above the principles of representative democracy in the making of Belgrade Waterfront and Skopje 2014 revealed the one-sided political motives behind alleged improvements of urban and national images through large-scale refurbishments of the capital cities. This ultimately offers new insights into the reasons why the implementation of UMPs in the context of both Serbia and Macedonia finally failed to reach its aim of satisfying public interest.

_____

References

Al Jazeera (2015) Neslaganja o novom izgledu centra Skoplja [Disagreements about the new appeareance of the center of Skopje], *Al Jazeera*, 29.01.2015. Retrieved from: http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/neslaganja-o-novom-izgledu-centra-skoplja

Andersen B and Røe PG. (2016) The social context and politics of large scale urban architecture: Investigating the design of Barcode, Oslo. *European Urban and Regional Studies*.

Aoun O and Teller J. (2016) Planning urban megaprojects in the Gulf: The international consultancy firms in urban planning between global and contingent. *Frontiers of Architectural Research* 5: 254-264.

Ápor, P. (2015) Museums of Civilisation, Museums of State, Museums of Identity: Nationl Museums in Europe 1918-2000. National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750-2010: Mobilization and Legitimacy, Continuity and Change. Routhledhe, London and New York, Aronsson, P., Elgenius, G. [eds.], pp. 33-65.

Bakarec, N. (2015) '"Beograd na vodi" kolosalna obmana', VREME, 2015-07-24, http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1173307.

BIRN Macedonia (2016) Skopje 2014 Uncovered, Retrieved from: http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en

Blagojević, Lj. (2005) Back to the Future of New Belgrade: Functional Past of the Modern City. Aesop 05 Vienna (online). Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/8576519/Back_to_the_Future_of_New_Belgrade_Functional_Past_of_the_Modern_City

Broudehoux, A.-M. (2010) 'Images of Power: Architectures of the Integrated Spectacle at the Beijing Olympics', Journal of Architectural Education, 63, 52-62.

Charney I. (2007) The politics of design: architecture, tall buildings and the skyline of central London. *Area* 39: 195-205.

Cook, A. (2010) 'The Expatriate Real Estate Complex: Creative Destruction and the Production of Luxury in Post-Socialist Prague', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 34, 611-28.

Cope, B. (2015) 'Euro 2012 in Poland: Recalibrations of statehood in Eastern Europe', European Urban and Regional Studies, 22, 161-75.

Cvitković, S.; Kline, M. (2017) Skopje: Rebranding the Capital City through Architecture and Monuments to Remake the Nation Brand. Sociologija i prostor, 55, 207 (1): 33-53

Damljanović Conley, T. (2010) Belgrade. Capital Cities in the Aftermath of Empires. Planning in Central and Southeastern Europe, Gunzburger Makaš, E; Damljanović Conley, T. [eds.], Routhledge, London and New York.

De Cerro, G. (ed) (2013) Urban Megaprojects: A Worldwide View, Bradford, Emerald.

Degen M and García M. (2012) The Transformation of the 'Barcelona Model': An Analysis of Culture, Urban Regeneration and Governance. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36: 1022-1038.

Dixon ML. (2013) The Southern Square in the Baltic Pearl: Chinese ambition and "European" architecture in St. Petersburg, Russia. Nationalities Papers 41: 552-569.

Domosh, M. (1992) Urban Imagery, Urban Geography, 13:5, 475-480.

Evans, G. (2003) 'Hard-branding the cultural city – from Prado to Prada', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 27, 417-40.

Filipović, G. & El Baltaji, D. (2014) 'Serbia's Vucic Promises U.A.E.'s Billions in Election Bid', Bloomberg, 13 March 2014, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-03-12/serbia-s-vucic-promises-u-a-e-s-billions-in-election-bid.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2011) 'Over budget, over time, over and over again: Managing major projects', In Morris, P. W. G., Pinto, J. K. & Söderlund, J. (eds) The Oxford Handbook of Project Management Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Flyvbjerg, B., Bruzelius, N. & Rothengatter, W. (2003) Megaprojects and risk: An anatomy of ambition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Frusetta, J. (2004) Common Heroes, Divided Claims. Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentyeith-Century Southeastern Europe, Lampe, J. and Mazower, M. [eds.] Ceu Press, Budapest & New York, pp. 110-130.

Gillet, K. (2015) How Skopje became Europe's new capital of kitsch? *Guardian*, 11.04.2015. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/apr/11/skopje-macedonia-architecture-2014-project-building

Golubchikov, O. (2010) 'World-city-entrepreneurialism: globalist imaginaries, neoliberal geographies, and the production of new St Petersburg', Environment and Planning A, 42, 626-43.

Golubchikov, O., Badyina, A. & Makhrova, A. (2014) 'The Hybrid Spatialities of Transition: Capitalism, Legacy and Uneven Urban Economic Restructuring', Urban Studies, 51, 617-33.

Graan, A. (2013) Counterfighting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia. Cultural Anthropology, Vol. 28, Issue 1, pp. 161–179. ISBN 0886-7356, online ISSN 1548-1360

Grubbauer, M. & Čamprag, N. (2018) Urban Megaprojects, Nation-state Politics and Regulatory Capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe: the Belgrade Waterfront Project, Urban Studies, SAGE Publications Ltd.

Grubbauer, M. & Kusiak, J. (eds) (2012) Chasing Warsaw: Socio-Material Dynamics of Urban Change since 1990, Frankfurt/Main, Campus.

Haug, Hilde Katrine (2012) Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia. Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, New York.

Hilber, L. & Datko, G. [edit.] (2012): Stadtidentität der Zukunft, Jovis Verlag GmbH, Berlin.

Hirt, S. (2012) Iron Curtains. Gates, Suburbs and Privatization of Space in the Post-socialist City, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell.

Ignjatijević, M. (2016) The Collapse of the Rule of Law in Serbia: the "Savamala" Case. *BCSP*. Retreived from: http://pointpulse.net/magazine/collapse-rule-law-serbia-savamala-case/

Jacobsson K. (2015) Urban grassroots movements in Central and Eastern Europe. Farnhan: Ashgate.

Jakov Marusic, S. (2015) New Tapes Show Macedonian PM 'Designed' Skopje 2014, *BIRN*, *BalkanInisght*. Retreived from: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-opposition-exposes-skopje-revamp-project

Jones, C. (2015) Written Out of History: Macedonia's Nationalist Rhetoric and the Oppression of Ethnic Albanians, *Diplomacist*, 07.04.2015. Retrieved from: https://diplomacist.com/2015/04/07/201545written-out-of-history-macedonias-nationalist-rhetoric-and-the-oppression-of-ethnic-albanians/

Jović, D. (2004) Communist Yugoslavia and its "Others". Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentyeith-Century Southeastern Europe, Lampe, J. and Mazower, M. [eds.] Ceu Press, Budapest & New York, pp. 277-302.

Kinossian, N. (2012) ''Urban entrepreneurialism' in the Post-socialist City: Government-led Urban Development Projects in Kazan, Russia', International Planning Studies, 17, 333-52.

Kinossian, N. & Morgan, K. (2014) 'Development by Decree: The Limits of 'Authoritarian Modernization' in the Russian Federation', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 38, 1678-96.

Koch, N. (2014) 'Bordering on the modern: power, practice and exclusion in Astana', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 39, 432-43.

Koch, N. & Valiyev, A. (2015) 'Urban boosterism in closed contexts: spectacular urbanization and second-tier mega-events in three Caspian capitals', Eurasian Geography and Economics, 56, 575-98.

Komisija za javni uvid u Nacrt Prostornog plana [The Commission for public access to the Draft Spatial Plan] (2014) Izveštaj o obavljenom javnom uvidu Komisije za javni uvid u Nacrt Prostornog plana područja posebne namene uređenja dela priobalja grada Beograda - područje priobalja reke Save za projekat "Beograd na vodi" [Report on the public insight of the Commission for public insight to the Draft Spatial Plan for the Specially Designated Area for Development of a Part of the Riverfront of the City of Belgrade Waterfront – River Sava Waterfront Area for the 'Belgrade Waterfront' Project], No. 350-244-244/2014-01.

Kovács, Z., Wiessner, R. & Zischner, R. (2013) 'Urban Renewal in the Inner City of Budapest: Gentrification from a Post-socialist Perspective', Urban Studies, 50, 22-38.

Kriznik, B. and Janev, G. (2008). "From open city to grand national capital. Mapping the symbolic reconstruction of Skopje". Presentation given at the workshop 'Remapping Skopje'. Retrieved from: http://skopje2803.blogspot.de/2009/04/where-is-skopje-going-incident-in.html#comments

Kubiena, M. (2012) Skopje 2014 - Musealizing the City, Re-inventing History? The Western Balkans Policy Review, Volume 2, Issue 1, Winter/Spring 2012, pp. 78-99.

Kunczik, M. (1997) Images of Nations and International Public Relations. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Lalović, K., Radosavljević, U. & Đukanović, Z. (2015) Reframing Public Interest in the Implementation of Large Urban Projects in Serbia: the Case of Belgrade Waterfront Project, Facta Universitatis, Series: Architecture and Civil Engineering, vol. 13 (1), pp. 35-46.

Lehrer, U. & Laidley, J. (2008) 'Old Mega-Projects Newly Packaged?Waterfront Redevelopment in Toronto', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 32, 786-803.

McNeill D. (2007) Office buildings and the signature architect: Piano and Foster in Sydney. *Environment and Planning A* 39: 487-501.

Moulaert F, Rodriguez A and Swyngedouw E. (2004) The globalized city: economic restructuring and social polarization in European cities, Oxford u.a.: Oxford Univ. Press.

Müller, M. (2011) 'State Dirigisme in Megaprojects: Governing the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi', Environment and Planning A, 43, 2091-108.

Novy, J. & Peters, D. (2013) 'Railway megaprojects as catalysts for the re-making of post-industrial cities? The case of Stuttgart 21 in Germany', In Del Cerro, G. [ed.] Urban Megaprojects: A Worldwide View. Bingley, Emerald.

Olds, K. (2004) Globalization and urban change: capital, culture, and Pacific Rim Mega-Projects, Oxford u.a., Oxford University Press.

Orueta, F. D. & Fainstein, S. S. (2008) 'The New Mega-Projects: Genesis and Impacts', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 32, 759-67.

Palonen E. (2013) Millennial politics of architecture: myths and nationhood in Budapest. *Nationalities Papers* 41: 536-551.

Plaza, B. (2000) 'Evaluating the influence of a large cultural artifact in the attraction of tourism - The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao case', Urban Affairs Review, 36, 264-74

Rapoport E. (2015) Globalising sustainable urbanism: the role of international masterplanners. *Area* 47: 110-115.

Republic of Serbia (2015a) Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia [Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije], No. 7/2015.

Republic of Serbia (2015b) Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia [Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije], No. 34/2015.

Republička Agencija Za Prostorno Planiranje (2014) 'Izvestaj o strateskoj proceni uticaja prostornog plana podrucja posebne namene uredjenja dela priobalja grada Beograda – podrucje priobalja reke Save za projekat "Beograd na Vodi" na zivotnu sredinu [Report on Strategic Environmental Assessment]'.

Sandercock, L. & Dovey, K. (2002) 'Pleasure, politics, and the "public interest" - Melbourne's riverscape revitalization', Journal of the American Planning Association, 68, 151-64.

Serbian Government (2013) Agreement on Cooperation between the Goverment of the Republic of Serbia and the Governent of United Arab Emirates, Belgrade, 17.02.2013, Downloaded from the official website of the Serbian Parliement http://www.parlament.gov.rs/ on 30.10.2016.

Serbian Government (2015) 'Joint Venture Agreement – Belgrade Waterfront Project, Belgrade, 26.04.2015', Downloaded from the official website of the Serbian Government www.srbija.gov.rs on 03.11.2015.

Shatkin G. (2008) The city and the bottom line: urban megaprojects and the privatization of planning in Southeast Asia. *Environment and Planning A* 40: 383-401.

Shepard, W. (2016) A Look At Abu Dhabi's 'Bad Joke': The Belgrade Waterfront Project, Forbes, 8.12.2016. Retrieved from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2016/12/08/inside-abu-dhabis-bad-joke-the-belgrade-waterfront-project/#74219b316c12

Sklair L. (2006) Iconic architecture and capitalist globalization. *City* 10: 21-47.

Smith A and Von Krogh Strand I. (2011) Oslo's new Opera House: Cultural flagship, regeneration tool or destination icon? *European Urban and Regional Studies* 18: 93-110.

Smith, A. (2002) When is a nation, Geopolitics 7(2): 5–32.

Srna (2016) Šarena Revolucija – Hiljade Gradjana na Protestima u Makedoniji [Colorful Revolution–Thousands of People Protesting in Macedonia], Blic, http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/sarena-revolucija-hiljade-gradana-na-protestima-u-makedoniji/jwdl8r8, retrieved on 2017-04-06

Stanilov, K. (2007): Taking stock of post-socialist urban development: A recapitulation, in Stanilov, Kiril (ed.): The Post-Social City – Urban Forms and space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism, Springer, 3 17.

Stenning, A., Smith, A., Rochovská, A. & Świątek, D. (2010) Domesticating Neo-Liberalism: Spaces of Economic Practice and Social Reproduction in Post-Socialist Cities, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell.

Swyngedouw, E., Moulaert, F. & Rodriguez, A. (2002) 'Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large–Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy', Antipode, 34, 542-77.

Tanjug (2011) Postavljen spomenik u Skoplju [A monument erected in Skopje], *B92*, 21.06.2011. Retrieved from: http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2011&mm=06&dd=21&nav_id=520393

Tanjug (2014) Vučić i bin Zajed o "Beogradu na vodi" i Er Srbiji [Vučić and bin Zajed about Belgrade Waterfornt and Air Serbia], *Blic*, 18.08.2014. Retrieved from: http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-i-bin-zajed-o-beogradu-na-vodi-i-er-srbiji/vh5jtg0

Temelová, J. (2007) 'Flagship developments and the physical upgrading of the post-socialist inner city: the Golden Angel Project in Prague', Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography, 89, 169-81.

Trumbull NS. (2014) Culture-led development and conflict over urban space: reimag(in)ing St Petersburg, Russia Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography 96: 1-22.

Turk, Z. (2014) Central and Eastern Europe in Transition: An Unfinished Process? European View, Vol 13, Issue 2, pp. 199 – 208.

Vujovic, S. & Petrovic, M. (2007): Belgrade's post-socialist urban evolution: reflections by the actors in development process, in in Stanilov, K. (ed.): The Post-Social City – Urban Forms and space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism, Springer, 361-383.

Vukmirovic, M., Milakovic, M. (2009) Investigation of the Spatial Potentials of Strategic Locations in the City's Waterfront: Sava Amphitheatre in Belgrade, in The Urban Project: Architectural Intervention in Urban Areas, L. van Duin, R. Cavallo, F. Claessens, and H. Engel [eds.], EAAE Transactions on Architectural Education nr. 39, Delft University Press

Wright, H. (2015) Belgrade Waterfront: an unlikely place for Gulf petrodollars to settle, The Guardian, 10.12.2015. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/dec/10/belgrade-waterfront-gulf-petrodollars-exclusive-waterside-development

Yeoh, B. (2005) The Global Cultural City? Spatial Imagineering and Politics in the (Multi)cultural Marketplaces of South-east Asia, Urban Studies 42 (5-6), pp. 945-958.

Expert interviews

Interview 1: Representative of the civic initiative Ne da(vi)mo Beograd ("We Won't Let Belgrade D(r)own"); Belgrade, Serbia, August 2017.
Interview 2: Former activist of the First Archi Brigade group and current representative of the civil rights group Plostad Sloboda ("Freedom Square"); Skopje, Macedonia, August 2017.

The semi-structured interviews have been conducted in Serbian language and translated to English by the author.

_____

Figures

Figure 1. Belgrade and Skopje in the former SFRY
Yugoslavia was a multinational country, composed of six federal states, with Belgrade as the federal capital city.

Figure 2. Planned large-scale interventions on Belgrade waterfronts
Legend: A – The Cloud, B – Former Beko factory, C – City on Water, D – Belgrade Waterfront
Source: http://www.bing.com/mapspreview accessed on 03 June 2017 with authors' additions
© 2017 DigitalGlobe ©, 2017 HERE, © 2017 Microsoft

Figure 3. Skopje 2014 project
Legend: A – Warrior on a Horse, B – the National Theatre and the Museum of Macedonian Struggle, C – the Constitutional Court, Archaeology Museum, and the Eye Bridge, D – Porta Macedonia, E – the Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra Hall, F – Financial police, Ministry of foreign affairs and the Art Bridge, G –the Parliament Building, H – Public administrative building
Source: http://www.bing.com/mapspreview accessed on 03 June 2017 with authors' additions
© 2017 DigitalGlobe ©, 2017 HERE, © 2017 Microsoft

Figure 4. Belgrade Waterfront master plan

Although rather late, in 2014 it was officially announced that the internationally renowned firm SOM designed the flagship Belgrade Tower. Authorship of the master plan, however, still remains unclear.
Source: Belgrade Waterfront, © Eagle Hills

Figure 5. Controversial initiatives in Skopje
Due to its high similarity with Alexander the Great, the monument Warrior on a Horse (l) caused a dispute with neighbouring Greece for appropriating its historical symbols and figures. The new Constitutional Court and the Macedonian Archaeological Museum on the riverbank (r) hid the view of the modernist National Theatre building.
Photo: A. de Keijser, 2013